Poor Richard Speaks Again for Thrift

By Earl Baldwin Thomas

"TIMES certainly have changed," said the elderly, wise-looking gentleman reposing statuesquely on his pedestal in Printing House Square, just in front of the Tribune Building. A glance at the inscription on the pedestal revealed the fact that the speaker was Benjamin Franklin, and confirmed the suspicion that he was a man of discernment.

"Changed?"

"Assuredly," said Benjamin, looking steadfastly across to City Hall Park, where Nathan Hale was gazing up with unblinking eyes at the sun-gilded tower of the Woolworth Building. "Not only the buildings and the streets and things similar have changed, but lately I have noticed a transition in the habits of my fellow countrymen that is very gratifying to me, even if I am counted among the dead ones.

"People used to laugh when I walked up the main street in Philadelphia with a bag of rolls under one arm and my teeth set firmly in a cinnamon bun. Recently I have noticed that the City of Fraternal Amity has been regarded as one of the principal advocates of thrift. For that, of course, I take due credit to myself, as is but fair.

"It is needless for me to call your attention to the fact that my portrait adorns the new issue of war savings stamps. Already they are plastering the countryside with lithographs and other products of the printer's art, proclaiming me as the Father of American Thrift.

The Habit Grows

"Thrift is the change to which I refer. It is gripping the entire nation, and I have watched it grow from this corner ever since the war began. From talk I hear I have no doubt that it prevails everywhere, although in my present capacity of standing on fixed post I am not in a position to go dashing uptown to the new Commodore for tea or to the Union League for breakfast for first-hand information. But the saving habit is growing steadily; even the latest reports about the income taxes aren't holding it back. You will remember when I was known familiarly as 'Poor Richard' that on one occasion I said:

"'Taxes are indeed very high, but if those imposed by the government were the only ones we had to pay we might more easily discharge them. But there are more grievous taxes that some of us have to bear. We are taxed by our pride, and even more so by our folly.'

"That line about pride and folly still applies, for human nature, after all, doesn't progress as rapidly as inventions in mechanics or improvements in trade methods mount up. Americans of to-day have locomotives where we had carriages, cabarets instead of coffee houses, steam sirens instead of Liberty bells and full-length instead of knee-length breeches. Men and women are still the same, with pride and folly ever on hand to cheat the foolish and rob the poor. We had sirens as well as belles in our day, but they were female. You have them, too, along with the more domestic species of folly. Both pride and folly serve to confound the householder who is honestly striving to acquire a knowedge of that virtue which I and my contemporaries passed on to posterity—thrift.

"For all who glory overmuch in the vanities of this world let me quote something that I was fond of saying when I was more active in the dust than in the bronze: 'Many a one, for the sake of finery on the back, has gone with a hungry belly and half starved the family.' Again: 'Beware of little expenses, for a small leak will sink a great ship.'

"Since some person who did not mind exposing me to the rain, mists, snow, cold and heat of the open first appointed me to this post I have listened to millions of persons as they swirled past on their way to work, in the leather firms, newspaper and brokerage offices. They used not to be interested in thrift, but when the war began an army of Liberty bond sellers and war savings stamp salesmen took up headquarters in Printing House Square and educated thousands into the habit of making one-cent pieces grow up to nickels.

"In the early morning hours I have probably noticed more 'husbands who sit up with sick friends,' milkmen, panhandlers and brokers who tried unsuccessfully to corner the cotton market than any other man, living or dead, since Peter Stuyvesant first placed his wooden leg on Manhattan and convinced the Indians that a trunkful of wooden beads was a fair price for an embryo metropolis.

No More Poor Journalists?

"Particularly I used to worry about the young reporters along Park Row. Occasionally, in their heyday of plaisance-taking they would fling me a glance, but none ever took the trouble to read what I said on thrift. Nowadays, however, I notice an improvement, for thrift is appealing to journalism just as much as to the rest. It's a poor editor who hasn't reformed since the war began. The rest have invested heavily in Liberty bonds and war savings stamps and are comfortably fixed. It pays to reform.

"Look at the stenographers and the clerks and all the downtown feminine workers. Have you seen a single one this winter without a fur coat, despite the balmy atmosphere? They also have become students of saving. I don't want to be catty, but when I look at the numbers of near-lynx, almost-bear, and possibly skunk-squirrel-or-fox coats which parade along Nassau Street, it occurs to me that the slaughter of harmless felines must have been terrific last autumn.

Buy a War Stamp and Be Sure of a Toothbrush

"When I was a boy I had a hard time to make both ends meet, so I began to save, and I speedily learned the primary lessons in thrift. What I learned then prompted me to coin this phrase, 'What maintains one vice would bring up two children.' You will conclude from this that I advise virtuous living. Thrift is a true virtue. Take the war savings stamp to which I have already alluded. You buy it to-day for $4.14. Five years from now you get back $5. That's a gain of 67 cents on a small investment. In five years five bucks may buy—at the present upward trend of costs—a first class toothbrush, a pack of cigarettes or a morning paper.

"One of Carter Glass's bright young men has figured out that if Columbus in 1492 had deposited $100 in a savings bank to the credit of this country the amount would have been increased to-day, through compound interest, to somewhere in the neighborhood of $2,000,000,000. That's enough to pay for one Liberty Loan.

"Under the circumstances I feel I can never forgive myself for not having deposited $25,000 in the First National Bank of Pennsylvania when I first went to Philadelphia. The accrued interest, I feel certain, would have replaced the money of some of those short-sighted persons who say they won't support the Victory Loan because the war is over. The idea! 'A good example is the best sermon.' That was one of my pet proverbs."

Franklin paused.

"Well, goodby," he said. "Here come the scrubwomen now, so I think I had better be quiet."

"Are you in favor of anything else besides thrift?" I asked him. "League of nations, prohibition, Bolshevism"——

"A man in my public position," said Ben, "does not dare to be too specific. Besides, I am too conspicuous a target."

Wild Editors I Have Known

By Sarah Addington

A PEDLER of pincushions could write his volume about the housewives of the country, and his work would stand as authentic. A scribbler who escorts his pieces from office to office comes to know his editors in the same intimate fashion. If a housewife likes blue, the pedler pulls out a fat blue thing and dangles it before her eyes until she buys. In the same wise, the writer, whether real or imitation, sizes up the great gent that presides over the dummy sheet and the wastebasket and—strives to please.

The housewife may be strong-minded, a perfect resistant to these wiles and traps, and, ye gods! so may be the editor, but the psychology of salesmanship is practically the same, for selling is selling the world over, whether it's poems or pie pans in your sample case. The only difference between the salesman proper and the writer is that the writer makes his own product, poor wretch, and is on a strictly commission basis. Otherwise the whole dreary business is the same.

And so, as we stick our noses day after day into that consecrated, hallowed ground that is the editorial chamber, we learn a thing or two or three about editors. There is that one who takes you out to lunch, bless him, and the editor who wears suspenders, unashamed; there is the one who flatters you to death and never buys your stories; there is he who edits you viciously and advertises your stuff in 18-point caps. There is the one who tells you you're too clever to be great, and there is he who remarks that you're too lazy to be famous. There is the editor who predicts that success will get you if you don't watch out, and there's the one who warns you solemnly against Greenwich Village.

And there is the one who bought this piece. What shall we say of him?

These are a few. How hard we try to understand them; how humbly do we take their measures and tailor the story to fit! Ready-mades for editors? Never. They may buy their hats from a bargain stand, but their stories are made to order. And if he doesn't like the material, or the way it's put together, or if he had one like it last year, there's no use; he won't even give it house room over night.

What folly of salesmanship it would be to offer the frock-coated managing editor of the gravest daily in New York an airy trifle on lingerie and lipsticks, or what Bessie Broadway will wear at the beach! With what disgust would he view such a lapse of judgment, and with what a disdainful thumb would the very office boy pen your name and send it speeding back. But send him an article on a movement, a campaign, a scientific discovery, and the money is yours. This is by way of a simple example to show how carefully the author must consider the editors in his field, how they toil not, neither do they spin, yet have the only key that fits into the door of success and future and career.

And authors do consider carefully. An anthology of editors is the unwritten masterpiece of most of them.

Who but an edtor, for example, could have participated in the following compact drama:

Stenographer: Miss A—— to see you, Mr. B——.

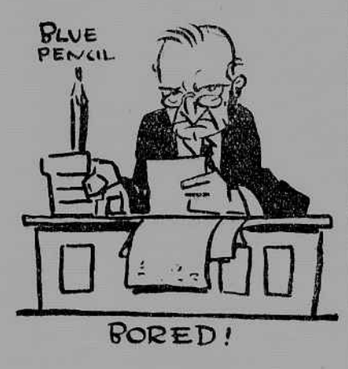
Mr. B: Tell her to go to hell, please.

Miss A—— (who is directly behind stenographer): Sir, I——

Gasps, apologies, titters, bowings, scrapings, confusions. Miss A—— flounces out.

Yet this was an actual occurrence. When the writer told the story as a joke on herself and a sidelight on the manners of ye editor, it was disavowed by his friends at the dinner table, who claimed he was a charming fellow. Miss A——, needless to say, mails her contributions to him now, under an assumed name, and reserves opinion about his alleged charm.

There is one "typical" editor in New York, the old school kind, a scholar first and an editor next, and a recluse all the time. He has no chair in his office because he is afraid some one will sit down and stay, and he keeps his wastebasket



empty because a girl once appropriated it and its contents for a seat, and stayed nearly half an hour! He is a lovable man, with a mellow humor, a genius for losing manuscripts, addresses and proofs, a taste for the essay and a habit of never knowing anything that's going on. He has a score of devoted contributors who would write for him for nothing before they would for many another for a gilded sum. They rail at his professorial

qualities, and, while they rail, write more and more for him.

He recently wrote to one of them: "You probably have something on what pleases you to call your mind. I suppose I shall have to use it."

He pretends to be abused, poor dear, but if he doesn't like a story he loses it!—one of the simplest devices known to the editorial trade.

We are for a certain editor who always says "yes" first, though a subsequent "no" may be forthcoming.

"Go ahead with your idea," is the usual say-so. "If you believe in it, it ought to have the breath of life."

His contributors go out bursting with enthusiasm, and the story comes through, their best efforts, usually. He doesn't always buy—he's a good editor—but we say his system is a neat one. And his habit of giving a free hand, whether he precisely likes the sound of the story himself or not, of encouraging, rather than discouraging, the writer, brings into his office some of the freshest, most confident stuff that is written for newspaper publication.

Women editors suit us very well. Most of them welcome the new writer, remember their friends and look out for value rather than "names"—all of them pleasant qualities to the hack-about-town who survives by what he sells. There is nothing of cattishness about the woman editor, no matter what the comic spirits of the country may say. A woman editor will buy from her dearest enemy if she thinks the story will help circulation. Women editors run young bureaus in their offices, where youngsters of the female persuasion who are stung with the writing bug may come and tell all. They are literary bureaus, kind friends, prospective buyers, all in one.

Most women attack their magazines or departments as they would a batch of bread in the making. They plunge their hands deeper into the stuff than men do, work with it themselves, give it shape and form and content. Men editors in their large way ask for results and get them; women evolve their own results as they achieve bread from flour and yeast from water.

An editor, when he knows people, seems to carry with him a special license to insult them. He does it in the manner classical, however, and calls it frankness or advice or some such euphemism. Nobody minds and he probably enjoys the process.

"My new fiction writer is a fat, giggling female, but she hath the touch of an angel," one said to a feminine staff member recently. "Now, you are a lovely young lady, with an especially propitious spring bonnet, but why don't you take some of the weight out of your pen hand?"

Everybody laughed merrily, and don't imagine for a moment that the lovely young lady minded because he told her she had a heavy touch. Not at all. Her attitude was that he could edit out what he didn't like from her stories. She had a permanent job, you see, and needed to truckle to no one.

A bored editor is the hardest nut to crack, that languid, blasé gentleman whom nothing pleases—until it has the sanction of type. After it is printed in his magazine it is the best story that was ever written, but when you first show it to him, he turns over the pages idly and raises his eyebrows another fraction. His aim is to reduce you to the humility of a worm, and that end he accomplishes by well known office tricks, such as the above mentioned. Bored editors don't get out such remarkably good magazines. Also, their ennui provides the stuff for the great class war that rages between the publishing profession and the Amalgamated Order of Press Agents. Press agents get on best with the open minded.

But if all editors are bored when it comes to reading your masterpieces, it may mean that there's something wrong with the product. In that case, there is always insurance to be sold.

Two and Two and a Third Party

By Deems Veiller

COUPLE A swayed on the right deck of the ferry and Couple B swayed on the left deck. They were unaware of each other. The Third Party stood in the middle, and he was tremendously aware; he was, I should say, all agog.

Man, Couple A, leaned in the shadow of the lookout and gazed thoughtfully riverward. He was a carefully careless young man, slouch hat, Dunlap, seven dollars and a half; soft shirt, studied necktie, orange with a blue scarab in it—rather a pretty affectation. He might have been an artist, a student, a vagabond; he was really a man of property who had successfully got over it.

The She of Couple A was poised, charming, pale, fashionable, blue fox furs, floating veil, bored just enough, perfumed just enough. The Third Party spat tobacco juice. "Not bad," commented he. His gaze roved to the left deck. There stood the feminine B, all shining in a nearseal coat and a beaver hat, heavy with last summer's roses. She was obviously respectable and had very red hands.

The Third Party spat again: "Not bad, either."

Mr. Couple B crossed his legs and leaned against the lookout; his derby in the crook of his arm. He was in a Sunday suit of dark blue. You knew it was a Sunday suit, just as you knew that he was a plumber, a carpenter or a grocer's clerk. His eye was fixed on the rim of the setting sun; he was thinking deeply.

A fresh puff of air rippled over the Hudson and snatched at Miss A's veil. Mr. A started. Being a systematic young breeze and quite lacking in class distinction, it fluttered over to Miss B, and lifted her hat clear off her head. Mr. B moved forward eagerly, and his derby clattered to the deck. "Excuse me," said he.

"I don't talk to strangers," said she of the rose hat, primly.

"Aw, kid!" said the man, "some sun, ain't it?"

"Yes," said the nearseal coat, reluctantly.

"You don't mind if I stand alongside you, do you, kid?"

The man was already at the rail close to her. The dying rays of the sun gilded their awkwardness into a semblance of grace.

The Third Party closed one eye slowly, "Pretty picture," said he, sentimentally.

Return now to Couple A in the moment when they were first touched by the flurry of air. "Ahem," said he. She was too well-bred to notice that.

"Pardon me," said he. She looked up arrogantly. Her nose tilted curiously. "Simply couldn't resist the er—sunset," explained the artistic young man, moving to the rail beside her.

"Now what," said she of the blue fox furs, "is the proper precedent, to scream or to slap your face?"

"Don't slap my face," begged the man, delighted.

"Then I'll have to scream." She was a darned attractive woman.

He answered, "If you do scream, you know, there is no one to hear you. We are alone on the upper deck."

"I'll appeal to the sunbeam elves," whimsically.

"Ah, I knew you were a poet."

"Do you believe in elves?"

"I do to-night."

"That's just what you should have said:" this from the girl.

Silence—they stood together and watched the reddened sky. The Third Party turned his head; he spat. "Pretty picture," said he. "Funny," he mused. "I thought them two was perfectly respectable girls." At this the breeze, with the promise of spring in it, frolicked across the deck in a drunken eddy of joy and danced madly away.

"It's getting rough," said the Third Party.

∴ In Our Block ∴

By Harlan Thompson

OURS is a funny block.

So is every one's.

To dispel the perfectly natural fear that it's your funny block that is going to be yanked out in front of people, it might be well to state at the beginning that this is one of those blocks in the Forties which has Broadway at one end and yet hasn't found room to squeeze in a theatre. Which should be specific enough for ordinary purposes—of which this is one.

From its inability to harbor a few theatres it might be inferred that the block leads a crowded existence. Unlike most inferences, this one is correct. The block does.

At least, it does from 11 in the morning around to 4 the next. The chances are that it does the other seven hours, but that is something on which no one can speak definitely. You see the block goes to its several beds about 4 and pays absolutely no attention to itself before 11. For all the block knows, there may be all sorts of morning goings on; but for these, if any, the block can't and won't be held responsible.

For all the block knows, there may be women who take advantage of its periods of unconsciousness to desecrate its sidewalks with steps more than fourteen inches in length. Let them. But let them, also, understand that nothing of that sort is going to be attempted after 11 and before 4.

Not when it is considered unsportswomanlike to take the full 14-inch allowance. Most of them can maintain a 9-inch stride skirt in and skirt out—and never rip a hem. They are pretty good in our block.

Further study of the preceding paragraph leads to the conclusion that one statement is not supported fully by the available evidence. It might be more reliable to confine it to "skirt in."

The daylight hours in our block are busy, but futile. One somehow feels that they are too much taken up with men who unload rattly coal and other men who murmur invitations anent old clothes. Sometimes one even has a vague misgiving that things happen in our block that could happen in other blocks, but then one looks upon the 11:50 dog parade or something and is straightway reassured.

The parade really starts the day. All that comes or goes before is sporadic and preliminary. Such are the white vegetable ivory hand mirrors with doughnut shaped handles that appear on the window sills at 11:10. So, too, are the lathery areas that flit beyond the mirrors, lose their lather and become jowls.

Other preparations less to windowward must go on about the same time, to judge from the carefully laid pigments on exhibition at the dog parade. Shortly after this is over the uniforms begin to appear in large numbers and continue in large numbers from then on until the block calls what has been mostly night a day.

There are no special features on the afternoon programme. At best the afternoon is no more than a few weary, inevitable hours that must be endured before dark.

But after dark! Then it is that our block comes into its own. From a quite ordinary appearing section of street, walled with less ordinary buildings and peopled by not at all ordinary persons, it changes at nightfall to an enticing back eddy in the glittering, dazzling stream called Broadway. To that river of dancing, flaring light it adds a few ripples of its own.

Under the spell of darkness anything becomes not only possible, but matter of course. Then come the things that could never happen in any block but ours.

It is raining and the pavement is criss-crossed with shimmering streaks from this and that group of lights. Unmindful of the downpour, two men stand on the curb. Water glistens on their derby hats and on the fur collars of their overcoats. They apparently are deep in some important argument, for their gestures are tense with feeling.

Suddenly the smaller breaks away with an excited sweep of his arms and strides to the middle of the street. After a couple of preliminary swings he rises on one toe and spins like a top. He stops, makes a triumphant gesture to his companion and repeats the spinning. Not satisfied, he leaps into the air and whirls uncounted times before coming down. This also he repeats and then walks back to the curb. The other man is smiling and nodding his head. They shake hands fervently and resume their way.

"It's the hit of the act," the smaller one is saying as they pass.

It was also raining as the sailor and the girl walked by the non-closing restaurant. They, too, were in argument. They stopped and bent all their energies in that direction.

"Well, go on, then," the girl said shrilly

He went on.

She watched him in amazement.

When he was fifty feet away and still going she ran after him madly. In spite of the skirt, she caught up with him before he reached the corner. He took her arm unconcernedly.

The drugstore on the corner belongs to our block as much as it does to the other street. The conversations in its telephone booths might be expected to fall into the usual categories. If there is anything that is not individual it is telephone talk. But many of these are different. As witness:

"Hello! . . . Hello, is that you, mamma? . . . How are you? . . . That's good. . . . Mamma, I won't be home to dinner . . . No, not to-night. . . . . Well, you see, mamma, I got a little drunk this afternoon—late this afternoon. . . . Yes, just a little drunk with Fred. . . . He came by and we got a little drunk together. . . . Sure, I'm all right. . . . Yes, sure. . . . We're going to have dinner now and then we're going to get a little drunker before I come home, so you shouldn't wait dinner for me. . . . Yes, mamma, I'll be home at 9 o'clock sure. . . . I can't get home. . . . We just got a little drunk. . . . Fred says to tell you that you can't do it very much longer, you know. . . . I don't think I'd better come now. . . . I'll be home by 9 safe enough. . . . All right, by 9. . . . Goodby, mamma. . . . Here's a kiss for you, too. . . . Goodby."

Every block has its fights, some more, some less. The most convenient time in our block seems to be about 2 a. m. The cabarets have closed by then and there is a sort of lull in the proceedings of the night that must be somehow enlivened. If no one else volunteers, chauffeurs can generally be depended upon to furnish excitement. It is of interest to note in passing that this is the only known instance where chauffeurs can be depended upon.

Occasionally an episode is unintelligible from the windows of our block. The lighting, for one thing, is such that much of the pantomime is lost, and if words fail, too, the plot is difficult to follow. It was so with the lady who stood in the middle of the street and sang violently to a decidedly disinterested gentleman on the sidewalk.

It was his unbroken silence that made it hard to follow. Even when an unexpected policeman came up and was sung to the thing became no plainer. It was evident from the policeman's manner that he wished for her to go and sing amid other surroundings, but she did not care for his suggestions. Then the policeman went away and she tired of the gentleman's inattention presently. So she went away singing and he went away in silence, and no one knows yet what the matter was—the policeman least of all.

Another unsolved mystery is how he managed or happened, or whatever it was, to disgrace her. It was certain that he had. She said so time and again as they stood in front of her steps. She felt rather deeply about it, so it appeared. Just what his attitude was will always be uncertain, for he took it more quietly than she.

"No friend of mine can disgrace me like that," she said, probably eighty-five times in all. "No friend of mine can disgrace me before 20,000 people and get away with it. I was never so disgraced in my life."

Which is not so remarkable, after all, because it is not every day that 20,000 persons are gathered together for disgracing purposes. In the course of time her reiteration of the facts in the case aroused the most intense curiosity as to how the exceptionable job of disgracing had been accomplished.

But it was not to be. She pulled the last handful of hair from her fur coat, turned the knob of the front door for the hundredth time, said "No friend of mine can disgrace me before 20,000 people" and was gone. Our block had nothing to do but watch him whistle his way down the street and ponder on how he had done it.

The leavetakings constitute the major portion of the last act in our block. Whether short or prolonged, there are always enough to maintain a barrage of goodbys on either side of the street until time is up. It is here that the uniforms come into prominence again. Not that they have any monopoly, but they are well represented.

In connection with the farewells must be mentioned in the interests of truth the only thing of which our block need be ashamed, the only thing in which it fails to maintain its standard of individuality, a thing in which it resembles your block and the block of everybody else.

Sad, indeed, it is to admit, but it is the truth.

Before he goes, they kiss in the shadow of the doorway and think no one knows.

The Wish

By Jeanne Oldfield Potter

Almost I wish Spring would not come
To tree or hill or glen,
For at its tread a quiver runs
Through old-time wounds again.

The speedwell comes into the fields,
The lanes grow white with may,
But underneath the hawthorn bush
No laddie waits to-day.

The round sun mocks me in the morn,
The sea wind tries the door,
The moonlight seeks his pillow and
Finds—moonlight, nothing more.

And yet to-day I found a glen
All deep and cool and dim.—
But it was empty, for it brought
No memory of him.